

The Lumpy, Skinny-Necked Dino-Bird

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[*Editor's Note:* In the first issue of *BioFortean Notes* (2011), I presented the eyewitness sighting of a small, bipedal, reptile-like animal near Gerlach, Nevada. I considered this a valid account that fit within a range of unusual 'dinosaur-like' mystery animals that have been reported in various parts of western North America (many sightings of which were not nearly as compelling). Of particular interest was the 'hair' or 'feathers' covering the animal, given the ongoing research into 'dinosaur feathers' in paleontology. Last fall, the eyewitness contacted me again; she had seen, in the same area, another unusual animal. While there were some basic similarities (some sort of bird-like bipedal reptile), there were differences also. It was a bit larger, and there were some differences in certain morphological traits. One might suggest it looked like what we could expect from ontogenetic changes, if it were an adult form of the animal previously seen. What follows is the account the eyewitness wrote up, with additional notes I took from speaking with her.]

WHERE I WAS AND WHAT I WAS DOING AT THE TIME:

[*This was on November 10, 2017. The weather was decent, a little cool at night, about 34° F.*]

I was in the area to do some rockhounding with an old fellow teacher friend. We have done this same trip for 28 years now. Usually several or more times a year, just she and I. I come up with my daughter and husband many more times a year. We own 159 acres about 15 miles down

Hwy. 447. (That is why I am in the area so often and why I know it quite well.)

I was on HWY 34, near the Granite Ranch, nearest the town of Gerlach, NV. The sun had set, but it was not dark or dusk. I had my headlights on.

I was driving slowly (25 mph), “head-hunting” for my friend who I was to meet there that day. I was coming up to a tight turn in the road. I always slow down here, at this turn, as small cars may not be as visible due to view obstruction by brush, etc., and bad drivers who think they can navigate the turn going too fast.

I had my Catahoula dog with me. I was enjoying my loud music. I was focused on the road, due to the turn. (And, since the sun had set, animals can be on the move at this time more than during daylight hours.)

[This same evening, she had a coyote, a kit fox, and six mule deer cross in front of her on this same road.]

I was slowing down even further, shifting my eyes from the road to the right side of the road looking for my friend.

My friend could only be on the right side of this road if she was there, since this area is *not* fenced and not privately owned. The left side is private property.

This is when I saw it coming towards me.

MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THIS DINO-BIRD:

I saw a “something” moving toward my vehicle from the right-hand side of the road. It came out of the brush, and onto the shoulder of the road still moving toward me.

My very first thought was that it was a *huge praying mantis!*

That really got my attention. I don’t mind bugs too much, *but not that size.*

Why did I think it a praying mantis? It was green, or greenish, with arms folded in front of its chest, and I didn’t notice the head for a few seconds. I could tell by the height of the rabbit brush and other plants (growing/dead around) that it was about 2.5 ft tall at that point. I estimated this height due to the brush in this location being over 2 ft to maybe 6 ft at the most.

I then became *concerned* at this point still thinking it could be a praying mantis . . . (I know this sounds strange, but that’s what I first

thought). It wasn't a slow mover nor a fast mover . . . and it was still coming toward me for about another yard.

It must have then noticed the vehicle as it veered to the left, still on the sandy shoulder, and began to cross the blacktop road in front of me. That's when I noticed its head (and realized it was not a praying mantis! a small "lol" sigh of relief!) At this point the creature looked tall enough to pick the back of a person's rear pants pockets! So, I now estimated it at around 3 ft tall, head to feet.

I must have made a verbal noise, as my dog, even with music playing, shot his head up between the front seats to look into the road.

It was now facing the left of the road and I had a clear view of it from the side, and in my vehicle headlights.

[It was about 40 feet in front of her.]

RABBITS AND KANGAROO RATS:

I like to point things out to our dogs when driving. All you have to do is say "Rabbits" and they go crazy to look out onto the road. Out here in this part of Nevada, there are years where the jack rabbit and the kangaroo rat populations explode. Trying to drive at night is like gaming at an arcade . . . rabbits come out of nowhere to "run to the light" . . . it's an exhausting experience!

The kangaroo rats do a similar act like the rabbits . . . only they get to the center of the road and start to spin faster than the tea cup ride at Disneyland. (I wonder if these Dino-birds eat snakes and rodents. With such a long neck and small head and mouth, I would think they would need prey they could catch, gulp, and swallow quickly. And with those long claws they could pick snakes from their skinny burrows. Even scratch like a chicken and uncover some burrowing animal or plant roots. Who knows.)

THE CREATURE'S HEAD:

There was a one-time flash of eyeshine. But I did *not* notice eyeshine while it was turning and then turned sideways to me. (I'm guessing that may be because it was not looking directly at me when turning.) The eyeshine was light yellow but not white, and not very bright. I would compare the eyeshine to that of a deer or a horse.

The eyes were proportionate to the head. They were not as large or bulbous like an ostrich but more like a chicken's eye-to-head ratio.

The head size if compared to the entire body as a whole was small, and kind of reptilian in appearance. (It looked a bit like the Loch Ness Monster's head or like a plesiosaur's head looks on a long skinny neck.)

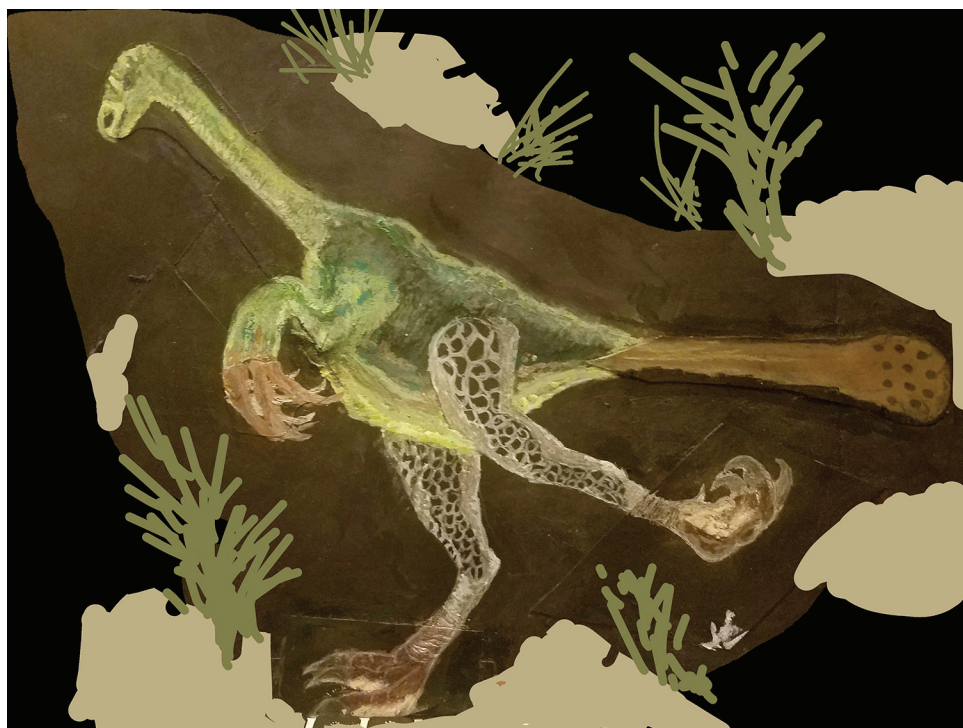
[It had a flat 'lizard' head, with a flat, rounded snout.]

CONTINUING ON DOWN THE BODY:

Head was followed down by a very upright, stiff-looking, skinny neck. The neck looked as if it had been planted directly onto the chest area. There was no real gradual slope into the chest area. The shoulder and hip area made the animal look lumpy. They were obvious "hills" in the outline of the animals' profile.

The legs were large, long, and solid looking, and I could see muscle flex and retract when it was moving. They were thickest at the thigh and graduated down to the ankle area. Very similar to ostrich legs. They looked to be covered in a pretty white and dark grey scale pattern.

The feet were large and wide looking with very thick pads on the bottoms. (I drew them a slight bit too large in my drawing!) The feet were a darker brownish black on top with yellowish /orange pads on the bottom. Much like chicken feet are.



It had claws on the feet that looked thick and strong in a more triangular shape. (Like “regular chicken style claws,” meaning they weren’t overly large or too small for the foot size.) The claws didn’t look weird or evil.

THE CLAWED FRONT LIMBS!!

The front claws on the front arms did look evil. . . . I have never seen claws like that on any animal! Just the brownish-colored claws themselves must have been at least as long as a popsicle stick each. That’s not counting the long fingers they were attached to, either. There were more than four claws and I’m pretty sure no more than six claws up front altogether. The claws and fingers were slightly different in overall length. Some seemed to “dangle” lower than others etc.

It did not seem to use its arms when moving or when it turned sharply onto the road to my left. It carried the arms folded tightly onto the front of its chest area with the claws and fingers pointed down at a minor angle to the ground.

It looked as if the fingers were attached to a wrist, then to a forearm and shoulder area. I did not see flight or similar feathers on the arm or hand area.

BODY OVERALL COVERING:

I am not positive, but pretty sure that the rest of the animal was covered in small size, close-fitting feathers.

Why? Because the legs were the only area I noticed muscle movement and scale pattern. The rest of the body looked “soft and slightly puffy” in overall appearance. With color changing from almost yellow to then variegated greens, until dark green near its body center then back out to greens and brownish yellow on the underside. I did not notice a scale pattern anyplace else on the animal.

It had a medium length, brown, long feathered tail (it looked a little like a peacock tail when carried closed) with black spots at the terminal ends. The tail appeared very “buoyant” and seemed to float out behind the animal as it moved.

THE WEIRD WAY IT MOVED:

The moving stride of this animal was like nothing I have ever seen before. As I said before, it was neither fast nor slow. But, its movement

appeared awkward and with excess motion! The hips seemed to roll in the sockets in such a way as to turn out and fling the legs away from the body, swing in a forward arc, then rotate forward and downward until then swinging back in and under the body.

It wasn't a shuffling stride like a reptile. It wasn't a chicken or ostrich stride either. But, the animal's back did not seem to rise up and down with the bizarre stride it was moving with. (I kept replaying that picture over and over later on.) But, its back stayed a fairly level and without much movement.

OTHER ODDITIES OBSERVED:

It did open its mouth as it was making its turn to my left and off onto the left side sandy shoulder of the road. I didn't notice any teeth. The inside of the open mouth was round-looking, almost flat, jaws

The head rotated atop the neck and the neck didn't seem to move or bend in any direction. Just looked stiff.

Only movement seemed from the legs and the head, as it turned, and the tail as it floated out behind the body in a "levitating" kind of style. (I don't know if levitating is the exact descriptive term.)

The eyes were placed forward in the skull enough so that it didn't really look "bird-ish". (I mean that its eyes weren't just on the sides of its head, but more toward the front of its face.)

The "eye size on its head ratio", looked more like a chicken than a hawk's eye or duck's eye, to use as a comparison. (A hawk's eyeballs being a bit too large and a duck's too small.) It looked like it could see over its nose/mouth with just a little skull between the eyes. It should have good vision forward to backward. (Even its neck shouldn't be in the way, lol!)

CONCLUSION:

That's what I remember best from that evening's encounter. My dog also watched it cross the road. He moved from between the front seats to another window behind me to continue watching it go. (I would appreciate his thoughts on the subject . . .)

I don't care if people think this is stupid or contrived. I think I'm lucky on a personal level and cursed on a public level. It's almost impossible to explain to another person what you've seen and expect them to believe you. But, there is or are several odd animals in this

area. They must have what they need to survive. It would be the “conservation area of a lifetime” if photos or video could be obtained to prove their existence. I can’t imagine how long they are going to go without discovery or destruction.

I’ll be stopping in to put a camcorder out every time I’m up there from now on. (I’ve an older Sony with night vision, so I hope they can’t “see” night vision light, that I can leave and not be ruined if someone steals it!).

And of course I’ll be paying more attention to large-sized, 3-toed tracks. Hard to say if anything will turn up. But one thing seems to have evolved at least . . . they aren’t as stupid as science has made most of them out to be. These seem to be “smarter than the rest” . . . but I know what I saw. It wasn’t any lizard or a loose Emu. Even a bus full of kindergarteners would have been yelling “Dinosaur!” because nothing else looks like a dinosaur but a dinosaur.

[She later examined images of a Therizinosaurus, and noted several similarities.]

[Editor’s Note: This is certainly a fascinating eyewitness report. She is going to continue keeping an eye out and may start broaching the subject with locals in the area to see if they’ve seen anything similar. She did note one additional event that may or may not be related. The previous spring, she and a friend were hiking in the hills across from Fly Geyser one evening, when they began hearing loud hissing noises all around them, on both sides of the trail. They were unable to tell what exactly was making the sounds.

I recently got in touch with a resident of Gerlach, who is also a small press publisher and looked like he had some familiarity with at least fictional cryptozoological literature. He had not come across any similar reports (though told me there had been stories of ‘giant coyotes’ in the area), but said he would ask around.]